United Nations A/54/65

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 February 1999
English
Original: French

Fifty-fourth session
Human rights questions

Letter dated 12 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the statement on the execution of Sean Sellers issued on 11 February 1999 by the Presidency of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Dieter **Kastrup**
Permanent Representative of Germany
to the United Nations

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the execution of Sean Sellers issued on 11 February 1999 by the Presidency of the European Union

The European Union deeply regrets the execution of Sean Sellers on 4 February 1999 in the State of Oklahoma. Mr. Sellers was 16 at the time when the crime for which he was sentenced was committed. The United States of America had not executed a prisoner for a crime committed at that age since 1959. The European Union had carried out démarches towards the American authorities at both federal and state levels to prevent that execution.

Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — to which the United States is a party — expressly states that the death penalty shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below 18 years of age.

The European Union recognizes that the United States has made a reservation to article 6 of the Covenant. Nevertheless, the Union believes that article 6 enshrines the minimum rules for the protection of the right to life and the generally accepted standards in this area. It notes that in the view of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the reservation of the United States is incompatible with the object and purpose of the convention and should be withdrawn.

The European Union considers that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and progressive development of human rights. Therefore the Union works towards universal abolition of the death penalty.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and Cyprus, associated with the European Union, and the countries of the European Free Trade Association, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with the present declaration.